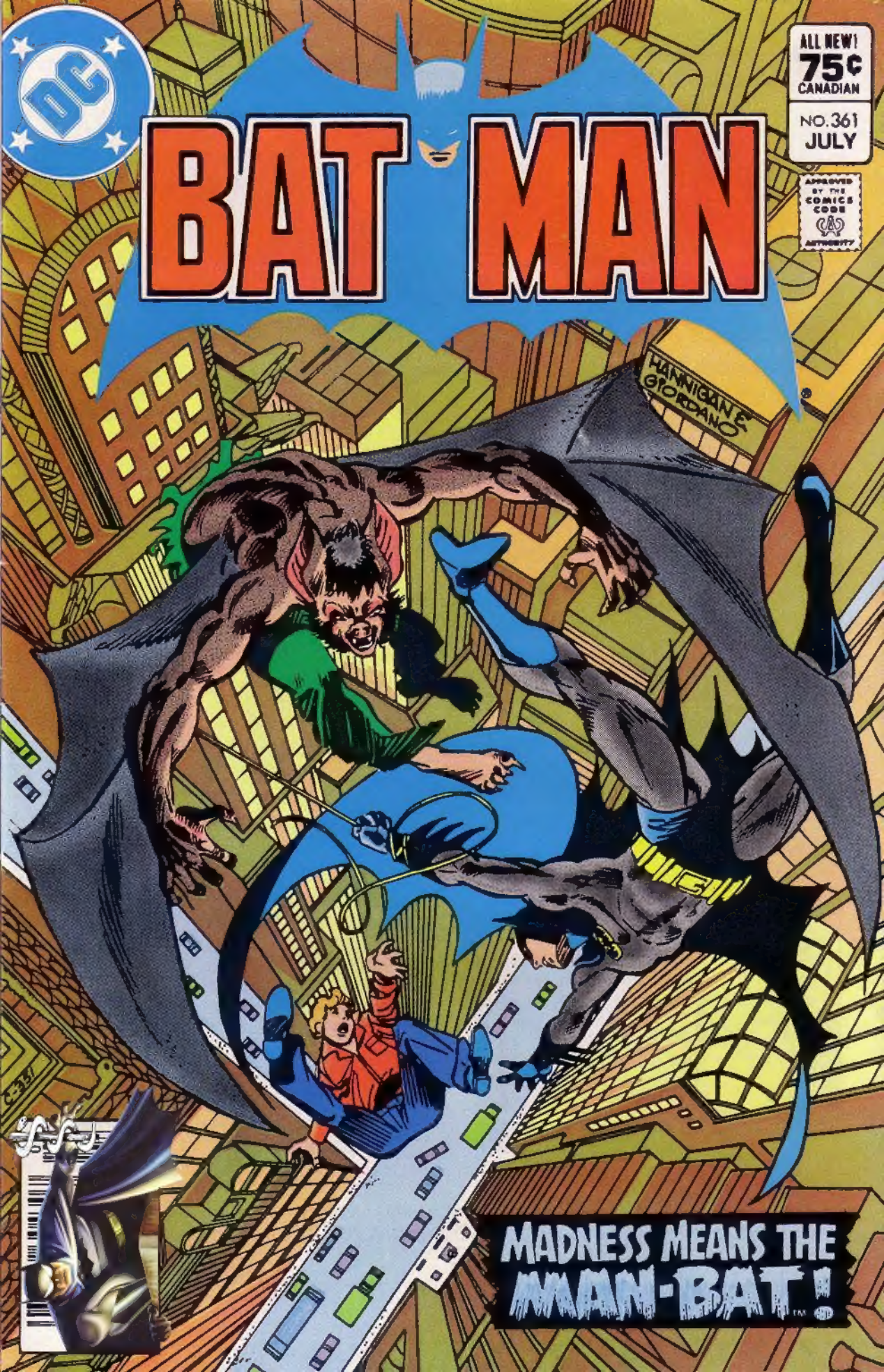
DC
BAT MAN
ALL NEW!
75¢
CANADIAN
NO. 361
JULY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
HANNIGAN & GIORDANO
MADNESS MEANS THE MAN-BAT!

AN HOUR AGO, HORROR TOOK THE SHAPE OF THIS:
YOU DESTROYED MY CHILD, BATMAN! SKEEK! NOW LET'S SEE HOW YOU LIKE IT!
NOOO!
BATMAN! I CAN'T BREAK FREE--!
THIS TIME YOU'LL PAY, MAN-BAT! THIS TIME YOU'LL PAY IN BLOOD!
AND NOW, DEEP IN THE CAVERNS ADJACENT TO THE BATCAVE...
I SAW HIM, SIR! THE MAN-BAT!
AND HE WAS HOLDING MASTER JASON --LEAVING THE CAVES, FLYING SOUTH!
THEN THEY COULD BE ANYWHERE IN GOTHAM BY NOW...
WHY DID JAY HAVE TO BE SO STUBBORN? IF HE HADN'T BEEN SO BENT ON PROVING HIMSELF AS MY NEW PARTNER, NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE HAPPENED!
PLEASE DON'T BE ANGRY WITH YOUNG JASON, SIR--HE'S JUST A BOY.
YOU'RE RIGHT, ALFRED, AND I'VE GOT TO START ACTING LIKE A MAN--BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE.
DON'T WORRY--WHAT YOU JUST SAW WAS FRUSTRATION WITH MYSELF.
BUT I'LL FIND HIM, ALFRED--IF IT'S THE LAST THING I DO!
G-GOOD LUCK ...SIR.
JASON!
1

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Phil & Doc Scan

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THE MAN-BAT IS ASLEEP NOW--FINALLY-- BUT WHAT GOOD DOES THAT DO ME? EVEN IF I TRY TO SQUIRM FREE, I'LL ONLY WAKE HIM UP.
BESIDES, IT WAS SO DARK--AND HE FLEW SO FAST--I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHERE WE ARE. SOMEWHERE IN GOTHAM, I GUESS, BUT I STILL DON'T KNOW THE CITY VERY WELL ...
COMING FROM A TRAVELING CIRCUS, I DON'T KNOW ANY CITY WELL ...
AND WHAT WOULD I DO IF I DID BREAK FREE--FALL ON MY HEAD?
MAYBE I WAS STUPID FOR WANTING TO BE BATMAN'S PARTNER ... IF IT'S GOING TO BE LIKE THIS, ANYWAY.

THE MOST SUCCESSFUL SPECIES!

DOUG MOENCH WRITER | DON NEWTON PENCILER | PABLO MARCOS INKER | PHILIP FELIX LETTERER | ADRIENNE ROY COLORIST | LEN WEIN EDITOR | CREATED BY BOB KANE

WAIT-- HE SHIFTED ONE OF HIS WINGS INTO A LOOSER GRIP... AND WHAT AM I SAYING, ANYWAY?
HAVE I LOST MY NERVE ALREADY?
AT THIS POINT, IT'S MORE THAN JUST LOOKING GOOD FOR THE BATMAN...
IT'S A LITTLE MATTER OF SAVING MY LIFE!
AND SINCE I'VE GOT NOTHING TO LOSE...
GONGGG
GOT IT-- JUST LIKE OUR OLD TRAPEZE ACT!
GONG GONG GONG
THE CHURCH BELL-- AT THIS TIME OF NIGHT?
HEY-- THERE'S A KID UP THERE!
CRAZY FOOL VANDALS! CALL THE POLICE, TOM!
WHAT HAVE YOU DONE, BOY?
SKEEKE ARE YOU TRYING TO BETRAY ME--?
UH... N-NO...
3

COME HERE, BOY-- }SKEEK{-- AND LISTEN TO ME!
NO! LEMME GO!
BECAUSE OF THE BATMAN, I LOST MY CHILD--}SKEEK{ --AND SINCE YOU SAY THE BATMAN IS YOUR "FATHER"...
...I'M CLAIMING YOU FOR MY NEW OFF-SPRING-- REVENGE AND RESTITUTION AT ONCE--AND NO ONE'S GOING TO TAKE YOU AWAY--}SKREEK{--!
NOW REMEMBER-- IF IT'S JUST A KID, WE HAVE TO GO EASY.
SKREECH
YOU STAY DOWN HERE AND KEEP A LIGHT ON THE BELFRY!
I'LL GO UP AND GRAB THE KID BEFORE HE BREAKS HIS NECK...
LIGHT!
THEY'RE DOING THIS ON PURPOSE-- }SKEEEEK{ -- TRYING TO BLIND ME!
THEY KNOW BATS CAN'T STAND THE LIGHT!
AND THERE'S ONE OF THEM NOW...
HEY-- ANYBODY HERE?
COME ON OUT, KID!
WE DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU...
4

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

NO! GET AWAY! IT'S THE MAN-B--
UHN!
SHWAK
BRAM
AGAIN YOU TRIED TO BETRAY ME -- FORCING US TO FLEE OUR ROOST! SKEEEKE BUT YOU'LL LEARN, BOY!
OVER THERE!
TIRES
BLAM!
FWHOOM
THE PUMP BLOWS --
WHRAM
--AND TWO ARRIVING SQUAD CARS SWERVE TO AVOID THE EXPLODING HELL.
602 POLICE
YOU'LL LEARN THE INSTINCT OF OBEDIENCE AS SELF-PRESERVATION --SKREEKE--ONCE WE FIND A NEW ROOST...
...ONE PERFECTLY SUITED TO YOUR NEW LIFE.
602 POLICE
TIG POLICE
6

SOME TWENTY-THREE MINUTES LATER...
WHAT IN BLAZES HAPPENED HERE?!
BLAZES IS RIGHT -- THAT INFERNO OVER THERE USED TO BE A GAS STATION.
NO WONDER.
DETAILS, COMMISSIONER?
EH--?
BATMAN!
WAS IT MAN-BAT, GORDON?
WHY, YES -- BUT IF YOU WANT DETAILS, THERE AREN'T MANY.
SOME SAY HE FLEW OFF NORTH -- OTHER WITNESSES CLAIM HE SWOOPED BACK TOWARD THE EAST.
IT WAS A PRETTY CONFUSED SCENE, AS YOU CAN IMAGINE...
A MESS -- AND TOMORROW MORNING I HAVE TO MEET THE NEW "ASSISTANT" MAYOR HILL IS PINNING ON ME.
A CHILD, JIM -- DID MAN-BAT HAVE A CHILD WITH HIM?
ACCORDING TO SEVERAL OF THE WITNESSES, HE WAS CARRYING SOMETHING ... GOOD LORD, BATMAN -- WAS IT A CHILD?
PHONE FRANCINE LANGSTROM AND PREPARE HER FOR A VISIT.
OF COURSE, BATMAN ... HMM ... SOME LUCK, FOR ONCE. IT'S GOING TO --
--RAIN?
BUT THE NIGHT-CREATURE HAS ALREADY DEPARTED FOR OTHER QUARTERS.
6

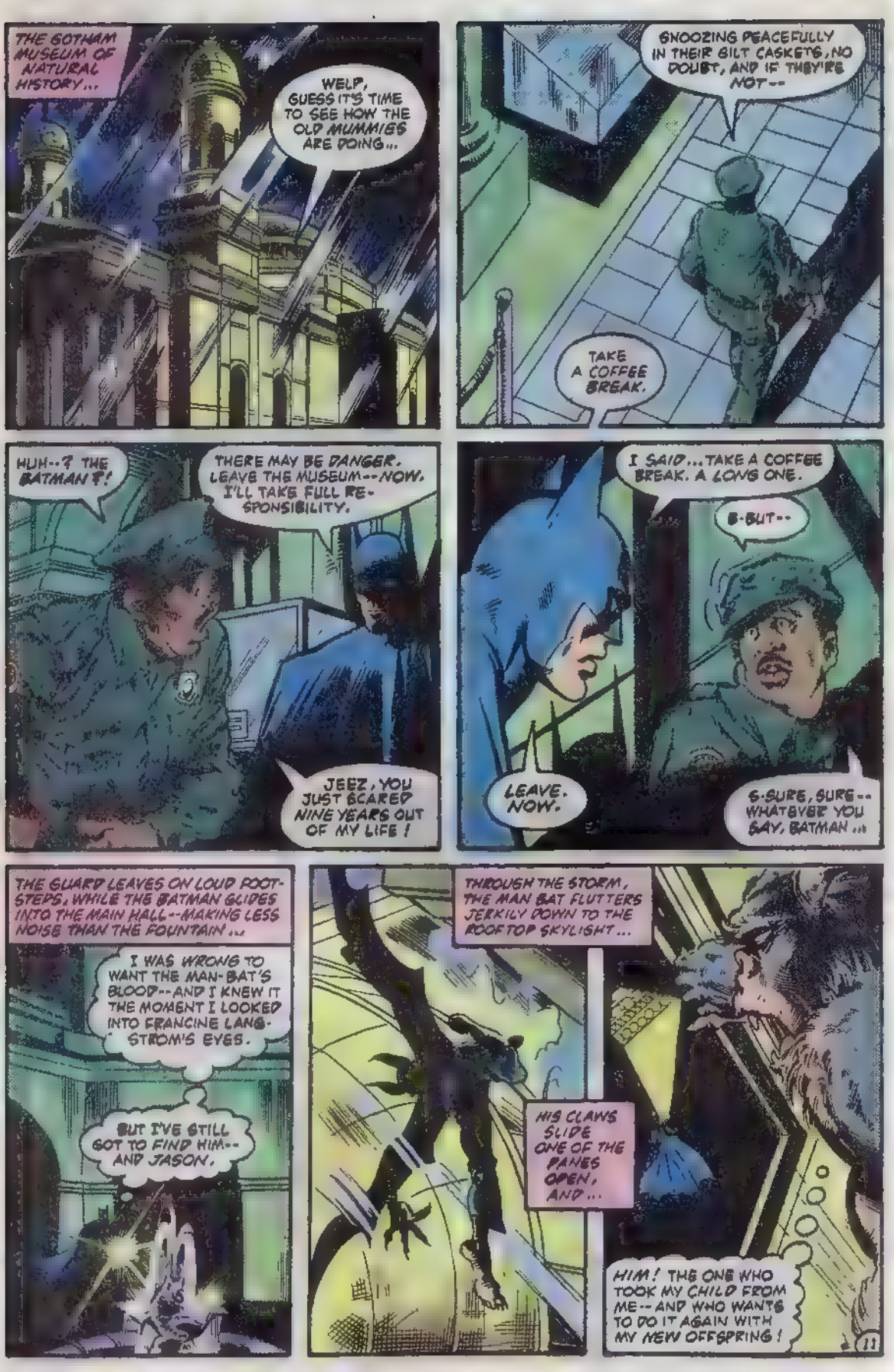
THE HOME OF KIRK AND FRANCINE LANGSTROM...
...WHERE A MOTHER SITS AWAKE, OBLIVIOUS TO THE STORM RAGING WITHOUT, KEEPING SILENT VIGIL OVER HER DAUGHTER REBECCA...
...AND WONDERING IF HER HUSBAND HAS AGAIN BECOME A MONSTER.
BRRING
H-HELLO?
OH, YES, COMMISSIONER ... YES, OF COURSE ... I UNDERSTAND.
YES -- THANK YOU. GOOD-BYE.
WAS THAT DADDY? IS HE COMING HOME SOON?
NO, DARLING, I'M AFRAID IT WAS JUST--
LIGHTNING FLARES LURIDLY, PAINTING THE SPECTER OF NIGHT ITSELF.
OH, MY GOD--!
MOMMY!
DON'T BE AFRAID...
I TOLD COMMISSIONER GORDON TO PREPARE YOU.
I ... I KNOW, BATMAN ... BUT EVEN SO, YOU'RE A RATHER STARTLING SIGHT.
WHY HAS IT HAPPENED THIS TIME? WHAT DID KIRK DO TO CAUSE THE CHA--
UH, BACK TO YOUR OWN BED LIKE A GOOD GIRL, BECKY -- DADDY WILL BE HOME SOON.
7

FLASHES OF LIGHT THROUGH CASCADING SHEETS OF RAIN, FALLING STARKLY ON THE FACE OF A WOMAN IN TURMOIL...
HE... HE SAID HE WAS TAKING THE ANTIDOTE REGULARLY, BATMAN, BUT HE'S BEEN SO DISTANT... SO INVOLVED IN HIS WORK ... I'M SURE HE COULD HAVE EASILY FORGOTTEN...
IT'S BAD THIS TIME, FRANCINE. HE THINKS REBECCA IS... GONE.
WHAT WAS HE WORKING ON?
NEW EXHIBITS AT THE MUSEUM, FOR HIS... HIS BAT DISPLAYS -- A FULL-SIZE REPLICA OF THEIR ROOSTING HABITAT AND SO ON...
ROOSTING?
YES, HE WAS EXCITED ABOUT SOME NEW RESEARCH--
-- NEW FINDINGS ON GESTATION PERIODS AND HOW BATS CARE FOR THEIR YOUNG, THINGS LIKE THAT...
FRANCINE... I'M GOING TO ASK YOU TO HELP ME -- HELP ME HELP YOUR HUSBAND. I NEED SOMETHING FROM YOU...
ANYTHING, BATMAN -- ANYTHING.
NO NEED TO STRUGGLE, MY CHILD -- NOW THAT WE'RE HERE IN OUR NEW ROOST.
WE SHALL DO WELL -- BATS ARE THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MAMMALIAN SPECIES, EVEN MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN RODENTS...! SKEEEEK
MMPHH!
THIS IS DUE TO OUR NOCTURNAL HABITS, WHICH MEANS WE HAVE ALMOST NO THREAT FROM -- SKREE -- PREDATION, AND DISEASE GETS ONLY A MINIMAL TOLL.
BUT THE REAL KEY TO OUR SPECIES' SUCCESS IS THE SPECIAL CARE BATS ACCORD THEIR OFFSPRING.
8

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

ONE SPECIMEN OF BAT PRODUCES 100,000,000 OFFSPRING EACH YEAR IN FIVE TEXAS CAVES ALONE--SKEEKE -- AND MOST OF THEM SURVIVE. YOU DON'T HAVE A MOTHER, BOY, BUT YOU DO HAVE A FATHER...
...WHO IS ALSO PARTLY A MAN... THE ONLY OTHER MAMMALIAN SPECIES WHICH MIGHT SUCCESSFULLY CHALLENGE BATS...
...AND I'M GOING TO SEE THAT YOU GET THE BEST CARE POSSIBLE--SKEEKE--UNTIL YOU'RE ABLE TO FEND FOR YOURSELF...
...AFTER YOU'VE BECOME JUST LIKE ME.
BUT FOR THAT, I NEED MORE GLAND-EXTRACT, MORE BATS-- SKEEKE --
--AND I KNOW JUST WHERE TO FIND THEM!
VICKI--? THIS IS BRUCE WAYNE. I KNOW IT'S AN IRREGULAR TIME TO BE CALLING YOU...
PHONE
...BUT I NEED A SPECIAL FAVOR.
9

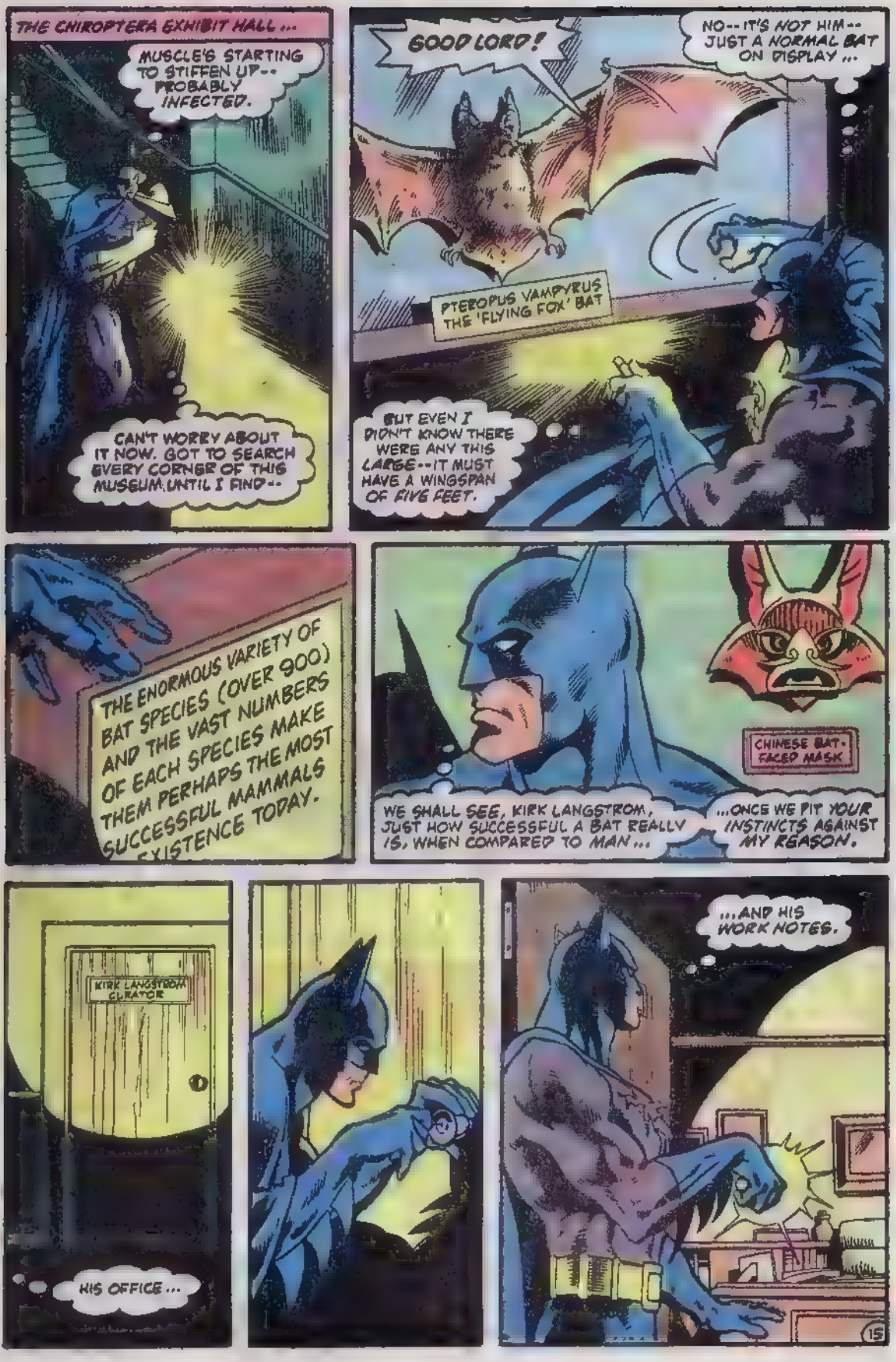
AND IN THE BEDROOM OF VICKI VALE, PHOTO EDITOR OF PICTURE NEWS...
"IRREGULAR TIME"--? THESE DAYS, THE ONLY TIME YOU CALL ME IS TO BREAK A DATE OR WHEN YOU NEED A FAVOR-- SO I'D SAY YOU'RE BEING VERY REGULAR...
...EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT THIS TIME IT HAPPENS TO BE THREE A.M.!
PLEASE, VICKI, THIS IS SERIOUS-- IMPORTANT. I TRULY NEED YOUR HELP AND I NEED IT FAST-- WITHIN THE HOUR.
WILL YOU DO IT?
THE SLEEPY VOICE ON THE LINE SIGHS...
WHAT DO YOU NEED, BRUCE?
AT WAYNE MANOR, ALFRED ALTERNATELY PACES AND PEERS OUT THE WINDOW--
--HIS LATEST LOOK COINCIDING WITH A BURST OF LIGHTNING...
GOOD LORD-- OUT BY THE CAVES! WHAT WAS THAT?
FOUR BATS NOW...
SKEEK
ONE MORE... SHOULD BE ENOUGH!
IT... IT APPEARED TO BE HUGE...
...BUT... TOO DARK TO SEE ANYTHING NOW...
AND WHEN THE LIGHTNING FLARES AGAIN..
NOTHING-- IT MUST HAVE BEEN A TRICK OF THE STORM.
PERHAPS I'D BEST BREW A CUP OF EARL GREY TO SETTLE MY NERVES...
10


THE GOTHAM MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY...
WELP, GUESS IT'S TIME TO SEE HOW THE OLD MUMMIES ARE DOING...
SNOOZING PEACEFULLY IN THEIR GILT CASKETS, NO DOUBT, AND IF THEY'RE NOT--
TAKE A COFFEE BREAK.
HUH--? THE BATMAN?!
THERE MAY BE DANGER. LEAVE THE MUSEUM--NOW. I'LL TAKE FULL RESPONSIBILITY.
JEEZ, YOU JUST SCARED NINE YEARS OUT OF MY LIFE!
I SAID...TAKE A COFFEE BREAK. A LONG ONE.
B-BUT--
LEAVE. NOW.
S-SURE, SURE--WHATEVER YOU SAY, BATMAN...
THE GUARD LEAVES ON LOUD FOOTSTEPS, WHILE THE BATMAN GLIDES INTO THE MAIN HALL--MAKING LESS NOISE THAN THE FOUNTAIN...
I WAS WRONG TO WANT THE MAN-BAT'S BLOOD--AND I KNEW IT THE MOMENT I LOOKED INTO FRANCINE LANGSTROM'S EYES.
BUT I'VE STILL GOT TO FIND HIM--AND JASON.
THROUGH THE STORM, THE MAN BAT FLUTTERS JERKILY DOWN TO THE ROOFTOP SKYLIGHT...
HIS CLAWS SLIDE ONE OF THE PANES OPEN, AND...
HIM! THE ONE WHO TOOK MY CHILD FROM ME--AND WHO WANTS TO DO IT AGAIN WITH MY NEW OFFSPRING!
11

HE FEELS IT HALF-WAY ACROSS THE MAIN HALL ...
EH--?
...A COLD SPATTERING FROM ABOVE ...
RAIN-- FALLING INSIDE?
SKREEEK
WAK!
UNN--!

PLASHH
SKEEEK
SKEEK?
SKEEK!
HE'S DEAD.
NOW I CAN RETURN TO MY ROOST -- AND MY CHILD.
GOOD THING I MANAGED TO SWIM OUT FROM UNDER MY CAPE AND COWL --
-- CRAWL OUT OF THE FOUNTAIN ON THE OTHER SIDE...
13

...BECAUSE AFTER TAKING THIS WOUND, I'M NOT SURE I CAN FACE HIM AGAIN...
STILL, I'VE GOT TO GO ON -- FOR JASON'S SAKE.
GOT TO FIND HIM ...GO THROUGH WITH MY PLAN...
MMPHH!
CAN'T SWING HIGH ENOUGH TO REACH THE ROPES--!
THE DOOR-- HE'S COMING BACK!
I'VE BEEN WATCHING YOU, MY CHILD-- THROUGH THE GLASS...
NO NEED FOR YOU TO STRUGGLE-- =SKEEK= --FOR I'VE PERFORMED MY PATERNAL DUTIES WELL...
...I'VE GOT THE BATS--
--AND I'VE JUST PROTECTED MY OFF-SPRING FROM A RARE NOCTURNAL PREDA-TOR =SKEEK= ANOTHER BAT, NO LESS!
THE BATMAN--HE'S KILLED THE BATMAN! I'VE FAILED HIM!
BUT DON'T WORRY, MY CHILD-- SOON YOU'LL BE JUST LIKE ME...
...AFTER I'VE INJECTED YOU WITH THIS BAT-GLAND EXTRACT... AND YOU'LL BE ABLE TO FEND FOR YOURSELF!-SKEEK=
14

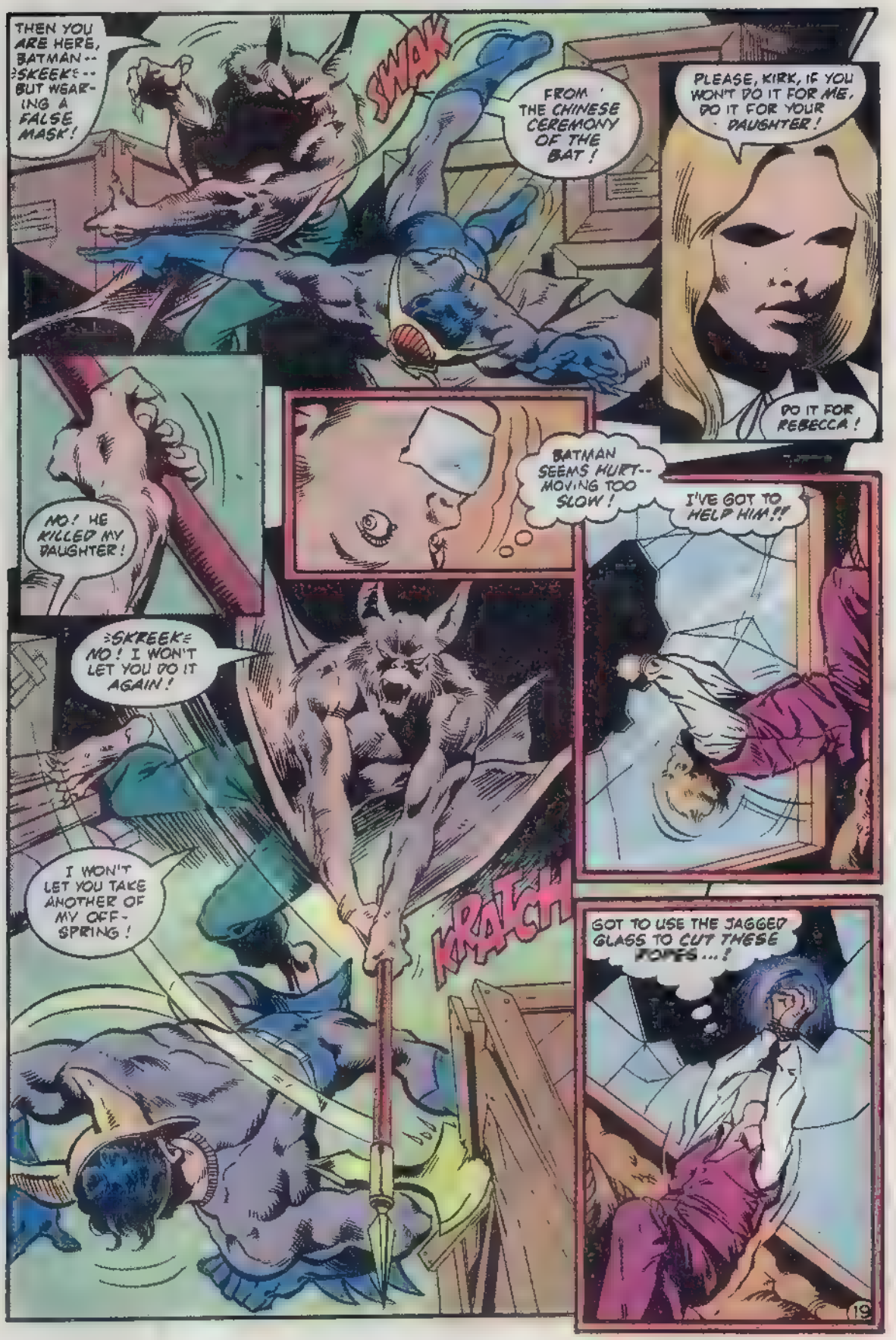

THE CHIROPTERA EXHIBIT HALL ...
MUSCLE'S STARTING TO STIFFEN UP-- PROBABLY INFECTED.
CAN'T WORRY ABOUT IT NOW. GOT TO SEARCH EVERY CORNER OF THIS MUSEUM UNTIL I FIND--
GOOD LORD!
NO-- IT'S NOT HIM-- JUST A NORMAL BAT ON DISPLAY ...
PTEROPUS VAMPYRUS THE 'FLYING FOX' BAT
BUT EVEN I DIDN'T KNOW THERE WERE ANY THIS LARGE-- IT MUST HAVE A WINGSPAN OF FIVE FEET.
THE ENORMOUS VARIETY OF BAT SPECIES (OVER 900) AND THE VAST NUMBERS OF EACH SPECIES MAKE THEM PERHAPS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL MAMMALS IN EXISTENCE TODAY.
CHINESE BAT-FACED MASK
WE SHALL SEE, KIRK LANGSTROM, JUST HOW SUCCESSFUL A BAT REALLY IS, WHEN COMPARED TO MAN ...
...ONCE WE PIT YOUR INSTINCTS AGAINST MY REASON.
KIRK LANGSTROM CURATOR
HIS OFFICE ...
...AND HIS WORK NOTES.
15

A PHOTO OF FRANCINE AND REBECCA ON HIS DESK, ALWAYS WITHIN SIGHT...
LANGSTROM IS A LOVING HUSBAND AND FATHER--WHEN HE'S A MAN--AND I'VE GOT TO SEE THAT HIS HUMANITY IS RESTORED BEFORE IT'S--
WAIT... WHAT'S THIS--?
MEMO Kirk— The director says he'll need more room for several crates of hominid artifacts— you'll have to move your displays from the basement by Tuesday. M. G.
THE BASEMENT! THEN IT'S TIME TO GATHER WHAT I NEED TO MAKE MY PLAY...
HOLD STILL! SKEEK! WHY DO YOU FIGHT IT?
HAVEN'T I PROVIDED US WITH A FINE ROOST? HAVEN'T I PROTECTED YOU AS MY OWN?
[redacted] IS IT THAT YOU JUST CAN'T UNDERSTAND UNTIL YOU BECOME LIKE ME? SKEEK!
IF THAT'S THE CASE, I CAN CHANGE IT FOR YOU RIGHT NOW. THE BAT-GLAND EXTRACT IS ALL PREPARED --SKEEK!-- READY TO--
KIRK! STOP WHAT-EVER YOU'RE DOING! PLEASE!
SKEEEK? F-FRANCINE...?
PLEASE, KIRK... REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE.
18

PLEASE, KIRK... IF YOU WON'T DO IT FOR ME--
--DO IT FOR YOUR DAUGHTER! DO IT FOR REBECCA!
BECKY--? NO... CAN'T BE --?SKEEKE-- SHE --SHE'S GONE... TAKEN FROM ME ...BY...BY--
--THE BATMAN!

CONTINUED ON 3E PAGE FOLLOWING.

SKREEEEK
BRASHHH
KIRK! STOP WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING! PLEASE!
SKEEK
WHAT..?
A TRICK!
PLEASE, K'RK... REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE!
WHUMP
YOU DON'T NEED A NEW CHILD, MAN-BAT!
YOUR OWN DAUGHTER IS FINE! SHE'S RIGHT HERE... YOU CAN SEE HER!


THEN YOU ARE HERE, BATMAN--SKEEK--BUT WEARING A FALSE MASK!
SWAK
FROM THE CHINESE CEREMONY OF THE BAT!
PLEASE, KIRK, IF YOU WON'T DO IT FOR ME, DO IT FOR YOUR DAUGHTER!
DO IT FOR REBECCA!
NO! HE KILLED MY DAUGHTER!
BATMAN SEEMS HURT--MOVING TOO SLOW!
I'VE GOT TO HELP HIM!!
SKREEK NO! I WON'T LET YOU DO IT AGAIN!
I WON'T LET YOU TAKE ANOTHER OF MY OFF-SPRING!
KRATCH
GOT TO USE THE JAGGED GLASS TO CUT THESE ROPES...!
19

HE'S WORSE THAN EVER BEFORE -- CALLING HIS DAUGHTER "OFFSPRING" --CONVINCED HE'S LITERALLY A BAT!
WUNK!
HE'S COMPLETELY BERSERK! THE CHANGE IS TAKING OVER MORE AND MORE OF HIS MIND AS WELL AS HIS BODY!
CAN'T RISK A LONG FIGHT! GOT TO FEIGN WEAKNESS-- SO I CAN GET UNDER HIM, AND --
NO!
LEAVE HIM ALONE, YOU MONSTER!
KIRK! STOP WHATEVER YOU'RE DOING! PLEASE!
YOU TOO--? YOU, WHOM I WOULD MAKE MY SON--?! SKEEK!
FRAKT
AND A BAT DESCENDS INTO THE BEST PLACE POSSIBLE ...
DARK-NESS, WROUGHT BY THE HAND OF MAN.

BATMAN--THAT'S NOT THE SAME HYPODERMIC HE WAS GOING TO USE ON ME--?
CLICK
NO, JAY, I BROUGHT THIS ONE WITH ME...
IT'S A COMPOUND OF ANTIDOTE AND ANESTHETIC...
"...AND IF WE'RE LUCKY, IT'S ALSO THE MAN-BAT'S SALVATION."
THEY ARE LUCKY--AND KIRK LANGSTROM IS THE RECIPIENT OF NOTHING LESS THAN A TIME-LAPSED MIRACLE.
HE SHOULD AWAKEN WITH NOTHING MORE THAN A HEADACHE...
...AND WHEN I SAY "NOTHING MORE", THAT INCLUDES MOST OF HIS MEMORY.
--WON'T DO IT FOR ME, DO IT FOR YOUR DAUGHTER!
WELL, YOU COULDN'T HAVE PICKED A BETTER PLACE THAN A MUSEUM TO CONSTRUCT THESE EXHIBITS OF YOUR OWN.
THE PHOTO-BLOWUPS LOOKED PRETTY REALISTIC IN GLOOMY LIGHTING.
FRAGILE
DO IT FOR REBEC--
VERY NEAT--IF MONOTONOUS.
CLICK
BUT YOU STILL NEEDED MY HELP...
...WHICH PROVES I'D MAKE A DECENT PARTNER.
I DETECT THE WHIFF OF FAULTY REASONING, JAY...
BUT RIGHT NOW I'M TOO TIRED AND SORE--AND RELIEVED--TO PUT UP A GOOD ARGUMENT...!
21

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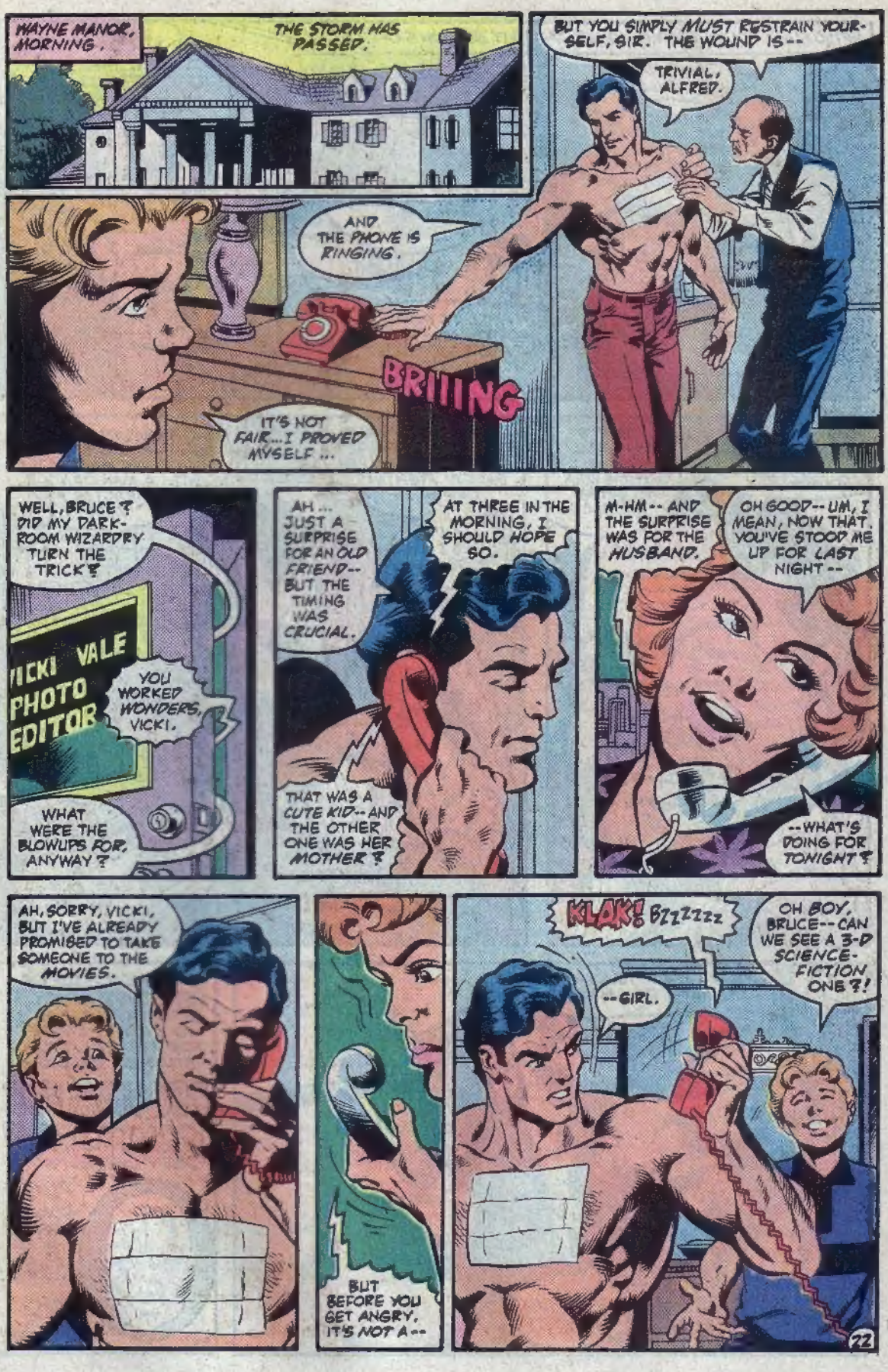
WAYNE MANOR, MORNING.
THE STORM HAS PASSED.
BUT YOU SIMPLY MUST RESTRAIN YOURSELF, SIR. THE WOUND IS--
TRIVIAL, ALFRED.
AND THE PHONE IS RINGING.
BRIIING
IT'S NOT FAIR...I PROVED MYSELF...
WELL, BRUCE? DID MY DARKROOM WIZARDRY TURN THE TRICK?
VICKI VALE PHOTO EDITOR
YOU WORKED WONDERS, VICKI.
WHAT WERE THE BLOWUPS FOR, ANYWAY?
AH... JUST A SURPRISE FOR AN OLD FRIEND--BUT THE TIMING WAS CRUCIAL.
AT THREE IN THE MORNING, I SHOULD HOPE SO.
THAT WAS A CUTE KID--AND THE OTHER ONE WAS HER MOTHER?
M-HM-- AND THE SURPRISE WAS FOR THE HUSBAND.
OH GOOD-- UM, I MEAN, NOW THAT YOU'VE STOOD ME UP FOR LAST NIGHT--
--WHAT'S DOING FOR TONIGHT?
AH, SORRY, VICKI, BUT I'VE ALREADY PROMISED TO TAKE SOMEONE TO THE MOVIES.
BUT BEFORE YOU GET ANGRY, IT'S NOT A--
KLAK! BZZZZZZ
--GIRL.
OH BOY, BRUCE--CAN WE SEE A 3-D SCIENCE-FICTION ONE?!
22

EPILOGUE: POLICE COMMISSIONER JAMES W. GORDON'S OFFICE...
BGLCH!
HARVEY BULLOCK--?!
THAT'S THE NAME, GORDON-- AN' I'M YER NEW ASSISTANT.
BUT I...I SUSPENDED YOU PERSONALLY--TEN YEARS AGO! YOU WERE A DISGRACE TO THE FORCE!
THAT'S RIGHT, GORDON--JUST THE WAY YOU SUSPENDED JACK CRANE AN' DROVE HIM CRAZY--
--TURNED HIM INTO THIS UNCLOSED-CASE SAVAGE SKULL CHARACTER.
THAT'S WHERE MAYOR HILL GOT THE IDEA TO BRING ME BACK--
--SO'S I COULD HELP YOU GET THIS SISSIFIED EXCUSE FOR A BULLPEN BACK IN FIGHTIN' ORDER!
AN' HERE I AM, BOOBIE.
BUT THIS IS INSANE! I WON'T HAVE IT! I ABSOLUTELY REFUSE TO WORK WITH A MAN OF YOUR CHARACTER AND RECORD!
'ZAT SO, OLD-TIMER?
WELL, I'LL TELL YA WHAT YA CAN DO ABOUT IT...
TELL IT TO THE MAYOR!
IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF DETECTIVE COMICS: GENE COLAN RETURNS TO THE ART CHORES FOR A NIFTY LITTLE STUNNER CALLED--
REQUIEM FOR SKULLS!
PLUS: GORDON TELLS IT TO THE MAYOR!
ON SALE APRIL 28!
23

BAT-SIGNALS

DC COMICS INC., 666 FIFTH AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10103

Dear Editor:

Upon reading "Don't Mess With Killer Croc" I can't help but marvel at how far this comic has progressed in the last 20 years or so. Back in 1963 when Jack Schiff was editor (remember?) BATMAN contained much action, adventure and fantasy, but little realism or character development. The Batman of 1983 maintains the elements of science fiction but also focuses largely on the personality of the man who is the hero, his drive, his psychological needs, his ultimate quest. The Batman of today is moody, introspective; there is much attention paid to personal problems and relationships, psychological insights as well as the more global statements concerning human nature, the problems of evil, societal struggles within a megalopolis, etc.

In 1963, Croc would have been typically introduced in the opening pages of the issue; he would reveal his powers to the readers (there would maybe be a statement about his background, but not necessarily), commit a crime; Batman and Robin would confront him but usually fail on their first attempt. After learning more about their adversary, they would confront him again and ultimately be victorious. The artwork (although I greatly enjoyed Bob Kane's depictions) was cartoony and exaggerated.

In issue 358, the writer provided a masterfully detailed plot development, with realism, suspense and continuity. The Croc, subtly introduced in last month's DETECTIVE, appears to be a deformed, ruthless, murderous villain reminiscent of Batman's greatest foes: Two-Face, Joker, etc. Mr. Conway keeps us readers in suspense on every page with all the details that deal with the "cooling" relationship between Bruce and Dick, Batman's slow and meticulous tracking down of Croc and their initial clash. Mr. Swan's artwork is also pretty good on Batman—a fact which surprised me. While he is an excellent Superman artist, I was not in the past impressed with his style when applied to the Batman.

In essence, the Batman stories of today are far superior to those of any other time. I look forward to the next 20 years in anticipation of even greater, higher quality materials. (I wonder what they'll look like then, maybe 3D comics?)

Sincerely,
DAVID MERCURY
Toledo, Ohio

Glad we compare favorably, David! It's too bad, though, that we're going to get knocked by some letter writer in about 20 years. Changing times and attitudes account for many of the changes in style that you pointed out.

*****

Dear Len,

Killer Croc is one of my all-time favorite villains in the Batman series of original bad boys!

Please keep this scaly scum around for another round with Batman. I love it when Batman fights in the gutter of life with all of the underworld's not-so-nice guys. This is what makes THE BATMAN.

Pages 20-23 were just great! It gave the entire feel of the Killer Croc storyline. This book is in the right direction, keep it going there.

STEPHEN SCOTT BEAU SMITH
110 Lewis Ave. Apt. #7
Barboursville, W.V. 25504

Thanks, Stephen. We also share a warm spot in our hearts for old cold-blood.

*****

Dear Len,

BATMAN #358 gives us a look at one of Batman's lesser known trophies, the brontosaurus-type mechanical dinosaur. The Caped Crusader *does* have a trophy like that, but as far as I know, we haven't seen it since "The 1001 Trophies of The Batman," in DETECTIVE #158, April 1950 (and in reprint in BATMAN #256). According to that story, the trophy comes from the Dinosaur Island case, just as the familiar mechanical Tyrannosaurus does.

Perhaps the brontosaurus deserves a more prominent place in the trophy room than it has had. In the tale of Dinosaur Island, the four-legged beast plays a more important part than the two-legged one!

Yours truly,
GEORGE R. JONES, JR.
Aberdeen, Maryland

A fine bit of research, George. Many thanks.

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Dear Editor,

If I were asked to name one specific thing which most characterizes "The New DC", I suppose I would point to the vastly improved covers, where word balloons lurk no longer, where, in fact, nearly all lettering has vanished. As a result, your frontispieces are generally far more intriguing. What better example to cite than BATMAN #358 with its shattered glass effect? Yet another fine bit of work from Hannigan and Giordano, whose covers virtually leap off of the newsstand at you.

The interior art was certainly an unexpected pleasure. Curt Swan took a break from chronicling the exploits of a certain Man of Steel to deliver a very stylish version of the Darknight Detective. Swan's pencils were made moody and suspenseful by Rodin Rodriguez, a good move since it made the former's work more atmospheric than it normally appears, yet Rodin did not hide Curt's distinctive style.

Gerry Conway's script on "Don't Mess With Killer Croc!" was the major disappointment, primarily because the title villain is rather dull and altogether too similar in name, technique and motive to The Squid, who just vacated these pages. Additionally, Croc is repugnant in appearance; not frightening, just repugnant. I'd rather be "grossed-out" by Two-Face any day. And if I am reading the handwriting on the wall properly, Conway is about to disclose that Croc has somehow been mutated from your average crocodile, probably once a child's pet who got flushed into Gotham City's sewer system. This whole Who's-Gonna-Take-OverThe-Mob-In-Gotham schtik is getting to be real boring anyway. Gerry should never have brought back Boss Thorne to begin with. He opened a whole can of worms that Steve Englehart dealt with

in DETECTIVE years ago and then wisely sealed up. I want Batman back on the streets dealing with average thugs and your occasional costumed lunatic.

There were two good scenes in this story. The first was when Batman hauled "Specs" off for the "third degree" in the Bat-Cave, calmly advising him that, since he isn't an official member of the police department, he doesn't have to play by the rules or worry about Specs' rights. A nice bit of vigilantism. We should see more of this, since Bats *is* a vigilante. The second (and best) sequence was Bruce and Dick's little tete-a-tete, wherein each realized that the once inseparable duo is growing apart. It was a lovely bit of characterization, honest and sobering. Moreover, it paves the way for the new developments I've been hearing about. Dick's circus buddies have been frequenting these pages for months now in order to set up the entrance of a new regular to the series, the character "find" of the 1980s, if you will.

A parting request: A Catwoman book, please? Or, at the very least, a Catwoman mini-series? Yours,

SCOTT GIBSON
2711 South Pinehurst Dr.
Evergreen, Co. 80439

We're glad that you picked up on that exchange between Bruce and Dick, Scott. When we first read it, we were immediately struck by its ring of truth. Suddenly, we felt we had a handle on who these two guys really are. We'd also like to follow up on your praise of the "New DC" covers by pointing out that a great number of those covers are drawn and inked by Ed and Dick, a very fine team.

* * * * *

While we've got your attention, we feel duty-bound to *warn* you *not to miss* BRAVE & BOLD #200. It's the last chance you're going to have to pick up this title, because with the next issue, it's going to be *replaced* by an exciting new team-up book headed by Batman himself and called BATMAN & THE OUTSIDERS! If you're wondering what *that's* all about, we can only urge you again to pick up B&B #200, in addition to the 40-page lead story, which was written by Mike Barr and illustrated by Dave Gibbons and which teams our own Batman with the Earth-2 version, you'll *also* find a free bonus story featuring the above-mentioned Outsiders. Wait'll you see who they are! As if all that's not enough, the entire 64-page package has been printed on a higher grade of paper, called Mando stock, so that your great grandchildren can read it without straining their eyes! So RUN down to your newsstand or comic shop and—HEY! Where'd everybody *go*?

Dear Troops,

Forget dark alleys, I wouldn't want to meet "Killer Croc" in a well-lit room. Who created this character anyway? He could give Two-Face and The Joker a run for their money as my favorite Bat-villain. Is that supposed to be The Squid on the coroner's table? He sure has lost a lot of weight between his death and the autopsy.

The team of Curt Swan and Rodin Rodriguez looks good in these pages, but I wouldn't want to see them permanently. The story was good also, although I wish the Batman had gotten his hands on the creep he bataranged in the shooting gallery, getting shot to death was too good for him. But guys like Specs deserve everything that happens to them.

I'm dying to see how the Dynamic Duo handle Trina Todd's finding out about their secret identities, but I'm afraid that it will affect Robin the most, and not too well. Meanwhile, back to Croc. In a way, he sort of reminds me of Kristin, the Yeti. He didn't ask to be what he was born as, nor can he help it, yet their hatred is really a mask for the loneliness of being the only ones of their kind in the world.

Closing questions: 1) How did Batman get out of the explosion without a scratch when Croc's clothes were in shreds? 2) Is there any further word on the "Batman" movie (locations, director, stars, etc.)?

Thank you, and see you in the comic pages.

WILLIE HOLMES
8453 S. Saginaw Ave.
Chicago, Ill. 60617

If I was working for our competition, Willie, we could give you a pat, easy, pseudo-scientific answer for all of your questions. We could say, for example, that the writer's brains were made of unstable molecules. But we don't do that here, so we must tell you that Batman was lying unconscious when Croc purposely blew up his apartment and was therefore not in the heat of the explosion, as Croc was. He may even have been shielded by a piece of furniture. As for the Batman Movie, we'll let you know the details as we get them. And as for The Squid losing weight after his death, that's simple. *He gave up snacks.*

* * * * *

Dear Mr. Wein,

I went into a stationery store two days ago to look for some comics and was I surprised to see Curt Swan's name at the bottom of the splash on BATMAN #358 (April 1983). Has he done another Batman story since 1952? (I'm thinking of "The Masterminds of Crime!" BATMAN #70 (April-May 1952), which Nelson Bridwell reprinted in BATMAN #238 (January 1972)) The splash itself looks somewhat stiff. The central figure is okay, I guess, but the thug on the left looks wrong. His clothing is drawn illogically, for one thing—the inker's fault? The man on the floor looks positively deformed, the way his chest balloons.

Page two is wonderfully effective, though. In panel one, everything emphasizes the power of the crime boss: the spotlight on the wall behind him, his standing away from the crowd, the low angle that makes him appear taller than anyone else. But Swan goes to a close-up of the man in the trenchcoat, panel two, and in panel three, where he is still in close-up, he is clearly much taller than the crook. Panel four is a long shot again, but now Croc is clearly on top to stay. The whole sequence is beautifully threaded by Croc's gesture of taking off his hat and putting it on again. His hand begins to move up in panel one, reaches the hat in two, holds it aside in three and restores it in panel four. I'm impressed.

Batman interrogates a crook on page nine, and overall continuity is provided by a slow zoom from long, long shot to close-up of the criminal's face. Furthermore, the first panel in each row is narrow, the second wider, the third narrow again. The pressure grows as the panel widens, but (where panels usually get wider and wider) it becomes greatest of all for the narrow, constricting third panel. In the first little climax, panel three, Batman's body begins to cover the crooks, and even the spotlight in back is squeezed out of shape. The crook confesses in the second climax. I don't remember Swan's ever doing anything like it before.

The following domestic scene (pages 10-12) is also good. Swan seems best at quiet drama, and the convention of the action scenes (here, pages 17 and 18) becomes annoying. At least action scenes are not the main issue in this story.

Actually, Gerry Conway does fairly well. This Croc is a Batman villain in the classic mold: freakish, mad and murderous. It is not clear what stealing the Air Force computer did for Croc, and his rage at the end seemed overdone. The nameless crook's long speech on page six ("She was just some stupid HOUSEWIFE—some lousy DAME in DYED HAIR") seems likewise contrived. Specs was all right, though with his dried-out voice—thanks to Ben Oda, by the way, for the complementary lettering.

AH, what a good job Curt Swan has done. It'll be hard to go back to anyone else. You couldn't persuade him to do some more, could you? Sincerely,

CHRISTOPHER MELCHERT
45 University Place
Princeton, N.J. 08540

We'll try like crazy, Christopher! And here's hoping that all of our readers will pick up on your intricate dissection of Swan's storytelling style and will look back for themselves, study the panel placements and breakdowns and learn. *Half the fun of comics is in observing the* execution *of the things and for* that, *you have to know the* basics. *So observe, dear reader, and you'll enjoy our books* twice *as much 'cause you'll* understand *what makes 'em tick!*

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And finally, please remember to check out our companion mag, DETECTIVE COMICS, for further adventures of Batman. And while you're waiting for that, *you may want to pick up number three in our GREEN ARROW mini-series, featuring the peerless prose of Madcap Mike Barr and the vivacious visuals of Trevor Von Eeden. Or perhaps you'd like to eyeball the brand-new villain debuting in THE NEW TEEN TITANS #33: TRIDENT! Just remember to be back* here *in thirty days!*